

THE OCCASION OF AFFIRMATIONS
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY
OF SERVICE TO THE LGBT COM-
MUNITY OF GREATER DETROIT

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 7, 2014

Mr. PETERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the staff and supporters of Affirmations on reaching a great milestone in their organization's history—twenty-five years of service to the Greater Detroit LGBT community.

Created in 1989, Affirmations began as the LGBT community's answer for a need to have a safe haven, with a mission to provide a welcoming space where individuals of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and cultures would be able to find support and acceptance. Operated entirely by volunteers during its first 2 years, Affirmations' first service was a toll-free phone line, where community members could call for information and assistance. Under the leadership of Affirmations' first executive director, Jan Stevenson, programs quickly expanded to include several support groups, where community members could find reassurance and acceptance among their peers.

From its humble beginnings, Affirmations quickly grew to address the evolving needs of Greater Detroit's LGBT community. At the center of its operating philosophy is the goal of empowering and educating volunteers to effect positive change in their own lives and in the broader community. Early on in its existence tragedy struck. In 1992 as Susan Pittmann and Christine Puckett, two of Affirmations founding members and leaders in Michigan's LGBT community, were murdered. Affirmations worked with other LGBT advocacy organizations in Michigan to rally the community and engage the public in a discussion on the need to protect all individuals from hate crimes.

The mission of advocacy has not waned in the years that have followed as Affirmations has held countless community forums and created many programs to assist its community members. Among these programs are health services geared toward practices that are sensitive to an individual's sexual orientation and gender identity. In a state and a country where it is still unfortunately legal for companies to fire someone based on their perceived orientation or gender identity, Affirmations provides LGBT youth with an internship program where they can gain valuable workplace skills in a supportive environment, and works with other local organizations to assist community members that have been the victims of discrimination in the workplace.

Over my many years in public service, as a proud ally of the LGBT community in Michigan, it has been a pleasure to support Affirmations' endeavors. Whether it is marriage equality, health services funding, or protecting LGBT people in the workplace and at school, Affirmations has been at the forefront of advocating for a more just, informed, and tolerant discussion of these important issues. Just two weekends ago, I was gratified to see that Affirmations rallied the community following Judge Friedman's historical ruling on marriage equality in Michigan to ensure that so many loving

LGBT couples were able to finally have all of the same protections under the law that other loving couples enjoy. I was proud to work with my fellow Democratic members of Michigan's Congressional delegation to successfully push for Federal recognition of those marriages.

Mr. Speaker, as a long time friend, supporter and ally of Affirmations and Michigan's LGBT community, I am proud to recognize the profound impact this organization has made in Michigan over the last 25 years. The staff, supporters and volunteers of Affirmations have touched so many lives through their years of dedication and advocacy—fostering a dialogue and taking actions that have seen great steps forward in the ongoing endeavor to obtain full equality for the LGBT community. In its first 25 years, Affirmations has worked hard to fulfill its mission and I look forward to continuing to partner with its staff, supporters and volunteers as we make more progress to ensure that our entire state is safe and supportive for Michigan's LGBT residents.

TRIBUTE TO PHILIP BLUMBERG

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 7, 2014

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and recognize Philip Blumberg of Des Moines University for being named a 2014 Forty Under 40 honoree by the award-winning central Iowa publication, Business Record.

Since 2000, Business Record has undertaken an exhaustive annual review to identify a standout group of young leaders in the Greater Des Moines area who are making an impact in their communities and their careers. Each year, forty up-and-coming community and business leaders under 40 years of age are selected for this prestigious distinction, which is based on a combined criteria of community involvement and success in their chosen career field. The 2014 class of Forty Under 40 honorees join an impressive roster of nearly 600 business leaders and growing.

Mr. Speaker, it is a profound honor to represent leaders like Philip in the United States Congress and it is with great pride that I recognize and applaud Mr. Blumberg for utilizing his talents to better both his community and the great state of Iowa. I invite my colleagues in the House to join me in congratulating Philip on receiving this esteemed designation, thanking those at Business Record for their great work, and wishing each member of the 2014 Forty Under 40 class continued success.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF
MALAYSIA AIRLINES FLIGHT 370

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 7, 2014

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend my sympathies to the families and loved ones of the 239 passengers and crew members of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which departed Kuala Lumpur enroute to Beijing on March 8, 2014, but disappeared some-

where over the Indian Ocean and has yet to be found.

In an age where powerful technology is capable of interconnecting the expanses of our world and able to provide real-time information globally, the haunting question must be asked: How can a sophisticated commercial airliner carrying 12 highly trained crew members and 227 passengers disappear without a trace?

Mr. Speaker, we owe it to families of those who appear to have perished on Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 to find answers and to take all necessary measures and make all necessary improvements to ensure that a tragedy like this never happens again.

Modern aircraft are technological marvels, capable of unrivaled aeronautical feats. The advances in aircraft technology have helped make possible many of the smart devices we use daily. But a disaster involving the disappearance of Malaysia Flight 370 has revealed glaring weaknesses in aviation technology areas of flight safety, information monitoring, and recovery.

The modern commercial airliner is among the safest machines ever built. Fail-safes, system redundancies, automated controls, and sophisticated radar systems ensure that almost any crisis can be prevented if the best practices of flight are observed. However, if the technology was perfected, disasters like that of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 could be eliminated.

In the case of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, the transponders—devices important to tracking the aircraft via radar—were disabled, effectively eliminating most modern methods for tracking the aircraft. Whether the tracking technology was powered down or disabled as a result of a catastrophic failure is irrelevant to the question of safety. The fact that tracking technology important to the recovery of an aircraft can be manually disabled in the air is a technological flaw that must be corrected.

Design processes that do not adequately exploit engineering technology or that prevent life-saving recovery efforts and lower safety standards need to be fixed immediately. In addition to critical safety measures, advanced methods of aircraft systems information monitoring need to be employed. Radar and tracking systems are as important to aircraft in the air as they are to monitoring systems on the ground.

During the search for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, experts were required to rely on unreliable "pings" from satellites that were only able to provide poor insight as to the location of the aircraft.

Mr. Speaker, monitoring information regarding the status of aircraft systems is vital in understanding whether operator error or system failure is responsible for aircraft disasters. Unfortunately, the majority of this monitoring information is stored internal to the aircraft, in flight data recorders.

In the case of a disappearance like that of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, system status information is essentially lost with the loss of the aircraft, or depends entirely on the recoverability of the aircraft.

Advanced technology can be employed to send real-time information on airborne aircraft to monitoring stations on the ground. If ground operators were able to monitor the system information normally contained in the flight data recorder, recovery operations would be streamlined and yield much more information,